THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1. A system for searching electronic data files stored in a data repository system, comprising: a communications environment housing

   (i) a first agent program for a depositor computer of an electronic data file in the data repository system and

   (ii) a second agent program for a first user computer with access privileges to the electronic data file;

   a manifest for the electronic data file listing access controls for the electronic data file, the manifest being accessible to and maintained by the first agent program;

   a first record of the first user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file, the first record being accessible to and maintained by the second agent program;

   means to communicate changes to the manifest affecting the first user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file from the first agent program to the second agent program for updating the first record; and

   means for the first agent program to verify the first user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file before the electronic data file is released to the second agent program.

2. The secure system, according to claim 1, wherein the first agent program is a secure extension of the depositor computer and the second agent program is a secure extension of the first user computer.

3.   The secure system, according to claim 2, further comprising means for communicating the changes to the manifest affecting the first user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file from the second agent program to the first user computer.

5   4.   The secure system, according to claim 2, further comprising:

a third agent program for a second user computer with access privileges to the electronic data file; and

a second record of the second user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file, the record being accessible to and maintained by the third agent program,

10   and wherein the means to communicate changes to the manifest affecting the first user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file from the first agent program to the second agent program for updating the first record, comprises means to communicate changes to the manifest affecting the second user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file from the first agent program to the third agent program for updating the second record; and

15   wherein the means for the first agent program to verify the first user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file before the electronic data file is released to the second agent program, comprises means for the first agent program to verify the second user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file before the electronic data file is released to the third agent program.

20

5.   The secure system, according to claim 4, wherein the third agent program is a secure extension of the second user computer.

6.   The secure system, according to claim 5, further comprising means for communicating the
25   changes to the manifest affecting the second user computer's access privileges to the electronic data file from the third agent program to the second user computer.

24

7.   The secure system, according to claim 5, wherein the communication environment comprises a server.

8.   The secure system, according to claim 5, further comprising an interface to the data repository system housed in the communications environment, the interface adapted to receive all communications to and from the data repository system and the agent programs.

9.   The secure system, according to claim 8, wherein the interface is a secure extension of the data repository system.

10.   A process for maintaining a secure electronic data search system for an electronic data repository, the system having a manifest listing access controls for each electronic data file stored in the data repository and a record listing document access privileges for each computer with access to the electronic data stored in the repository, the process comprising the steps of:

updating a manifest for an electronic data file stored in the repository;

identifying all computers with a change in access to the electronic data file effected by the update;

communicating the change in access to all affected computes;

updating the access privileges records of all affected computers; and

communicating the updated access privilege records to the affected computers.

25

11.   A secure system for searching electronic data files stored in a data repository system, comprising:

means for maintaining a manifest listing access controls for each electronic data file stored in the data repository system;

means for restricting access to each manifest to a computer with deposit privileges;

means for maintaining a record listing access privileges to the electronic data files associated with each computer with access privileges to at least one electronic data file in the data repository system;

10   means for restricting access to each said record to the associated computer with access privileges; and

means for updating the record associated with each computer affected by an access change in a manifest.

15

20

26

12. A computer program product on a computer usable medium for maintaining a secure electronic data search system for an electronic data repository, the system having a manifest listing access controls for each electronic data file stored in the data repository and a record listing document access privileges for each computer with access to electronic data stored in the repository, the program product comprising:

software for updating a manifest for an electronic data file stored in the repository;

software for identifying all computers with a change in access to the electronic data file effected by the update;

software for communicating the change in access to all affected computers;

software for updating the access privileges records of all affected computers; and

software for communicating the updated access privilege records to the affected computers.